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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000767

SIPDIS

OFFICIAL INFORMAL

FOR SA/INS

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TAGS: [AMGT](#) [CE](#) [MV](#) [ECONOMICS](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL INFORMAL NUMBER 070 (05/12/04)

Classified by DCM James F. Entwistle for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

CONTENTS: LOCAL REACTION TO REPORTED IRAQI PRISONER ABUSE
- TRADE MINISTER LETTER ON FTA
- NORWEGIANS/KADIRGAMAR

LOCAL REACTION TO REPORTED IRAQI PRISONER ABUSE

11. (C) FYI. Mission has heard there may be some negative reaction in Sri Lanka and the Maldives to the news accounts and photos of alleged abuse of Iraqi prisoners. In one case, a USAID contractor working in the ethnically diverse east was told not to visit a project as some Muslims in the area were worked up about the Iraqi abuse. In the Maldives, meanwhile, one contact thought that there were undercurrents of tension among some Maldivians regarding the reports. The majority of our contacts in both countries, however, have not indicated that anything significant is fomenting nor do we believe that any wave of anti-Americanism is developing. In fact, 99.9 percent of our contacts have not mentioned the matter to us and the whole matter has not been subject to a lot of press play in either country. (One caveat: Maldivians get some of their news off satellite Arabic language channels beamed in from the Middle East.) We will continue checking into the situation both here and in Maldives, including reports that there might be some demonstrations after Friday prayers here. (POL)

TRADE MINISTER LETTER ON FTA

12. (SBU) You should have the fax we sent today from Trade Minister Fernandopulle to USTR Zoellick. The Minister understand that Z is out, but wanted us to relay the contents and the fact that the original would be coming soon. The GSL wanted to be sure it got there while FM was still in the US. The Minister seems to believe (judging from enthusiastic press reports) that all he needs to do to get FTA negotiations rolling is to notify USTR in writing, which is what the letter is about. This may be due to a misunderstanding from Ambassador's introductory meeting with him. We are discussing how to reduce these high hopes here. (ECON)

NORWEGIANS/KADIRGAMAR

13. (C) FYI - as you prepare for S and D meetings with FM Kadirgamar today, look for our frontchannel Norwegian readout which will be zapped in your direction in a few minutes. (DCM)

LUNSTEAD